

Characterization of High Risk Food Consumption Practices Among the Hispanic Population, FoodNet 2000-2001

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Background: Hispanics, the most populous racial or ethnic group in the United States, with a population > 35 million persons, have a higher incidence of several foodborne diseases (including campylobacteriosis, listeriosis, and salmonellosis) than other racial/ethnic groups. Foods associated with outbreaks of these diseases ("high risk" foods) include undercooked eggs, uncooked fruits and vegetables, and unpasteurized juices and dairy products. Investigations of outbreaks of these diseases indicate that several high-risk foods were eaten more commonly by Hispanics.

Methods: The Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network (FoodNet) conducted a telephone survey to ascertain food consumption data from March 2000 through February 2001 from residents of California, Connecticut, Georgia, Minnesota, Maryland, New York, Oregon, and Tennessee (total population 29.5 million). The survey was administered in English using the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System methodology. Respondents were asked about foods eaten in the month before interview. We compared the food consumption practices of 11 high risk foods for Hispanics compared to non-Hispanics.

Results: Of the 14,647 persons interviewed, 14,525 persons reported their ethnicity; of these, 864 (6%) were Hispanic. Among respondents, the demographics of Hispanic were similar to that of non-Hispanics except for age. The median age for Hispanics was 23 years compared to 34 years for non-Hispanics. Hispanics were more likely ($p < 0.05$) than non-Hispanics to eat 10 (91%) of the 11 high risk foods. Hispanics were more likely than non-Hispanics to eat sprouts (12 vs. 7%), parsley (16 vs. 13%) cilantro (44 vs. 10%) mangoes (31 vs. 9%), yogurt (50 vs. 44%), soft ice cream (44 vs. 37%), unpasteurized milk (3 vs. 1%), soft cheese made from raw milk (28 vs. 10%), runny eggs (37% vs. 30%), and oysters (8 vs. 6%). Hispanics were less likely to eat hot dogs (50 vs. 58%).

Discussion: Hispanics were more likely to eat many high risk foods identified through outbreak investigations, a factor that may contribute to the higher incidence of certain foodborne infections among Hispanics.

Suggested citation:

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